

March 25, 2010

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall and Rep. Ben Ray Luján today announced that the Navajo Nation will benefit from a \$32 million Recovery grant to create an ultra fast broadband network on the reservation. The new broadband network will cover more than 15,000 square miles across New Mexico, Arizona and Utah where more than 60 percent of residents lack basic telephone service. The group officials made the announcement on a press conference call with U.S. Secretary Gary Locke, Former Gov. Toney Anaya and Rep. Jim Matheson of Utah.

The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA), which applied for the grant in August 2009, will use the funding to build one of the first Long-Term Evolution (LTE) wireless broadband networks in the country. The project will link 49 Navajo chapter houses by deploying 550 miles of new aerial fiber-optic cable and modified microwave towers over the region.

“I don’t believe there is a part of the country more worthy of an investment like this one. Too few Navajos have access to the services most Americans consider basic, such as water and electricity. So it’s no wonder there is chronic high unemployment on the Navajo Nation. In the long-term, bringing broadband to this underserved area will create many opportunities for advancing education, medicine and the economy. In the short-term, it will create good jobs in the region,” Bingaman said. “This is great news for northwest New Mexico and beyond.”

Udall, a member of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, praised the award. “This grant is monumental for the Navajo Nation,” he said. “The Navajo Nation faces greater challenges than non-native communities, including higher rates of diabetes, more unemployment and fewer high school graduates. I believe this award will help changes those circumstances by opening up new economic opportunities for education, health care and job creation. With this cutting-edge broadband network, the Navajo Nation and northwest New Mexico will have technology to leap ahead.”

“I am greatly encouraged by this American Recovery and Reinvestment Act award for Navajo Nation to improve their broadband capabilities and bridge the digital divide,” said Luján. “This

award will connect communities, help businesses grow, and provide students with the resources to expand their skills.”

NTUA expects this new telecommunications infrastructure will spur more affordable Internet service for as many as 30,000 households, 1,000 businesses, and an additional 1,100 community institutions, including public safety, health and social services, and emergency care facilities.

The high speed Internet network will likely take three years to complete. The total cost for the project is \$46 million. Additional matching funds from NTUA and Commnet Wireless will be used to complete the project.